

**Testimony of**  
**Jennifer Stroop, Board Certified Genetic Counselor**  
*in support of*  
**SB 857- AN ACT CONCERNING LICENSURE FOR GENETIC COUNSELORS**  
**February 20, 2015**

Senator Gerratana, Representative Ritter, Senator Markley, Representative Srinivasan, and Members of the Public Health Committee, thank you for the opportunity to speak to you today. My name is Jennifer Stroop, I am from Southington, and I am a hereditary cancer genetic counselor. I am fortunate that I love my job of 20 years, with 14 years in my current position with UCONN Health. I am here to testify in strong support of Senate Bill 857- An Act Concerning Licensure for Genetic Counselors.

Genetic counselors do a lot of public speaking, giving talks to medical professionals, students, and the general public. One of my favorite public speaking tools is to present the top 5 myths about genetic counseling and testing in hereditary cancer. So I will draw on that method today, and address the myth that genetic counselors do not need licensure.

First, I want to address the myth that genetic counselors and genetic testing increase health care costs. I have seen unnecessary, more expensive tests ordered by other health professionals, when the correct, specific test would have been much cheaper. We also get referrals from health care professionals to help patients, when insurance plans have denied the request for medically necessary genetic testing.

Another area of cost savings comes from individualized hereditary cancer risk assessment. By combining a detailed cancer family history and genetic test results, we work with a team of health care professionals to empower patients, categorizing low risk patients and eliminating unnecessary screening, as well as increasing screening for the high risk patients who are followed more closely using nationally recognized standards and guidelines.

However, the growing interest in personalized medicine also presents a risk to well-meaning consumers. Direct- to-consumer companies offer various kinds of DNA testing. One company was strongly reprimanded by the FDA, and ordered to stop providing clinical interpretation of DNA data. But, the company continues to offer DNA testing. The reports now give the customer raw DNA data, which the customer is left to research on their own. Not all DNA testing provides accurate, actionable information.

For my second myth, there is a perception among well meaning health care professionals that they should offer genetic testing to their patients. But, I have seen patients for which the wrong test was ordered, when the correct genetic test was part of the rapidly expanding number of genes beyond *BRCA1* and *BRCA2*.

Finally, when it comes to consumer protection, I believe that our national certification is not sufficient in comparison to licensure. Our national certification is necessary for creating and maintaining our professional standards, but it is not easily recognized by the general public.

Genetic counselors are highly trained in a rapidly advancing field, working as a team to use the correct tests to personalize risk and help reduce unnecessary costs. Licensure is needed to ensure that the high standards of genetic counselors are recognizable, and that the public is afforded the best level of care.

Thank you for your time and the opportunity to speak to you today.